Winter Driving

Introduction

Thanksgiving is the most heavily traveled holiday in the United States. If you are one of the many who will be driving home this holiday season, this message is for you.

Following these simple travel precautions will keep you and your family safe, even in the worst winter weather.

Before venturing out ....

Check the following items on your car

- Battery
- Antifreeze
- Wipers and windshield washer fluid
- Ignition system
- Thermostat
- Lights
- Flashing hazard lights
- Exhaust system
- Heater
- Brakes
- Defroster
- Oil level (if necessary, replace existing oil with a winter grade oil or the SAE 10w/30 weight variety)

Install good winter tires

- Make sure the tires have adequate tread.
  - All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions.
- Some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

Prepare for the unexpected

- Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season.
- Listen to the radio or call the state highway patrol for the latest road conditions.
- Always travel during daylight and, if possible, take at least one other person.

Pack a car emergency kit

- Flashlights with extra batteries
- First aid kit with pocket knife
- Several blankets or sleeping bags
- Extra newspapers for insulation
- Plastic bags (for sanitation)
- Matches
- Small sack of sand for generating traction under wheels
- Small shovel and tow rope
- Small tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Booster cables
- Set of tire chains or traction mats
- Brightly colored cloth to use as a flag

If trapped in your car during a blizzard

- Stay in the car.
- Do not leave the car to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. You may become disoriented and lost in the blowing and drifting snow.
- Display a trouble sign by hanging a brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna and raise the hood.

In addition to your car emergency kit, bring along

- Necessary medications.
- Rain gear and extra loose-fitting, lightweight clothing for layering and an extra set of mittens, socks, and a wool cap.
- High energy "munchies" such as canned fruit and nuts, a non electric can opener, and several bottles of water.
- Cards, games, and puzzles.
- Cellular phone.
- Ice scraper and small broom.

Keep warm

- Occasionally run the engine to keep warm.
  - Turn on the car's engine for about 10 minutes each hour.
  - Run the heater when the car is running.
  - Also, turn on the car's dome light when the car is running.
- Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation.

Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia

- Do minor exercises to keep up circulation.
- Clap hands and move arms and legs occasionally. Try not to stay in one position for too long. If more than one person is in the car, take turns sleeping.
- For warmth, huddle together.
- Use newspapers, maps, and even the removable car mats for added insulation.

Summary

Remember, winter weather is unpredictable. Snow and ice can leave you helplessly spinning your wheels or sliding out of control. Blizzards can turn bare pavement into hood-high drifts in a matter of minutes.

Prepare to arrive at your destination safely this Thanksgiving – even in the worst winter weather. Make sure your car is reliable and plan for emergencies.

Where to Get More Information

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Safety Council
- American Automobile Association